

Present continuous for the future

CEFR A2-B1 · 20 questions · A4 / US Letter

Fixed plans with a time and a place: why "I am meeting Anna at six" sounds more certain than "I will meet Anna".

The rule

The form and the time markers

- Form: am, is or are plus the -ing verb. I am meeting. She is flying. They are coming.
- A future time expression usually makes the meaning clear: tomorrow, tonight, this weekend, next Monday, on Friday, at eight o'clock.
- Without a time marker, the sentence probably describes now: "She is working" means at this moment, not next week.
- The negative and question forms are the same as any present continuous: "I am not working tomorrow", "Are you coming tonight?"

Arrangements with a time and a place

- Use the arrangement when someone else knows about the plan, or when it is in a diary: "We are having lunch at the Blue Cafe on Tuesday."
- Use it for social plans: meeting a friend, going to the cinema, having a party.
- Use it for appointments and travel with fixed times: "I am seeing the doctor at 4:30", "They are flying to Cairo on Sunday."
- Use it for work arrangements: "She is presenting the report on Thursday."

How it compares with going to

- Going to describes an intention, and the plan may still be loose: "I am going to start running."
- The present continuous describes an arrangement, and the details are settled: "I am starting the course on Monday."
- Sometimes both work, and the continuous sounds more fixed: "We are going to get married in June" versus "We are getting married on 12 June".
- If there is no arrangement, only an intention, use going to. If there is a date and a place, the continuous is natural.

How it compares with will and the present simple

- Will makes a decision now: "The phone is ringing. I will get it." It never describes a diary entry.
- The present simple describes timetables and schedules that run without you: "The train leaves at 7:45", "The film starts at nine."
- The present continuous describes your own arrangement inside that timetable: "I am taking the 7:45 train"

tomorrow."

- For a timetable that you follow, both can appear: "My flight leaves at six" and "I am flying at six".

Where the pattern does not fit

- Do not use the continuous for voluntary decisions made now: "I will help you", not "I am helping you", when the offer is new.
- Stative verbs keep their simple form: "I know the answer", not "I am knowing the answer".
- For predictions, use will or going to: "It will rain", not "It is raining tomorrow" unless the weather is genuinely arranged by someone.
- Promises take will: "I will call you", because a promise is made in the moment, not arranged in advance.

Questions

Write your answer on the line under each question. Check your work with the answer key on the last page.

1. I ___ the dentist tomorrow at ten.

2. They ___ to Paris on Friday morning.

3. What ___ you doing this evening?

4. We ___ Anna at eight tonight.

5. She ___ lunch with her boss on Monday.

6. The team ___ at six tomorrow morning.

7. I cannot come tonight. I ___ dinner with my parents.

8. ___ you coming to the party on Saturday?

9. He ___ the doctor next week about his back.

10. We ___ early tomorrow to catch the train.

11. They ___ house next month.

12. What time ___ you meeting Sarah?

13. My parents ___ us next weekend.

14. I ___ the 7:45 train tomorrow.

15. She ___ not working tomorrow; she has a day off.

16. We ___ tennis on Sunday morning.

17. The train ___ at 9:15 tomorrow morning.

18. ___ they arriving on the early flight?

19. I ___ to the gym after work.

20. The manager ___ the new staff on Friday.

Answer key

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1. **am seeing** — A dentist appointment with a fixed time is an arrangement, so the present continuous fits: am seeing.
2. **are flying** — Booked travel is a fixed arrangement, so the present continuous is natural: are flying.
3. **are** — The question asks about existing plans, so the present continuous question uses are: What are you doing?
4. **are meeting** — The meeting is arranged for a specific time, so use the present continuous: are meeting.
5. **is having** — A lunch appointment in the diary takes the present continuous: is having.
6. **is leaving** — The departure is a fixed arrangement for the team, so the present continuous works: is leaving.
7. **am having** — The dinner is already arranged, so the present continuous explains the refusal: am having.
8. **Are** — The present continuous question about an arrangement uses are before you: Are you coming?
9. **is seeing** — An appointment with a time is an arrangement, so the continuous is correct: is seeing.
10. **are getting up** — The early start is part of a fixed plan, so the present continuous fits: are getting up.
11. **are moving** — A settled plan to move takes the present continuous: are moving.
12. **are** — The arrangement is already fixed, so the present continuous question uses are: are you meeting.
13. **are visiting** — A visit that both families have organised is an arrangement: are visiting.
14. **am taking** — My own travel plan within the timetable takes the present continuous: am taking.
15. **is** — The negative present continuous uses is not: She is not working tomorrow.
16. **are playing** — A social arrangement with a day and a time takes the present continuous: are playing.
17. **leaves** — A timetable runs without the speaker, so it takes the present simple: The train leaves at 9:15.
18. **Are** — The arrival is an arrangement, so the present continuous question begins with Are: Are they arriving?
19. **am going** — A fixed plan for today takes the present continuous: am going.
20. **is meeting** — A meeting booked in the diary takes the present continuous: is meeting.